

# Blurring Borders

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# Preface

Dear reader. What is the beginning for you, is an end point for me. I have already written the document you are about to encounter. This writing is evidence of my personal journey. This writing has the quality of a documentation and enables me to communicate my research to you, the reader. Writing was a mode of thinking for me, except that it actually created traces. Reading this document enables you to follow this traces.

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*„Writing resembles having a blindfold over our eyes and our hands tied behind our backs: we can't see exactly whom we're talking to or where we are. Separated from our audience in place and time, we imaginatively have to create this context.“<sup>0</sup>*

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To help you tune in, I want to tell you who I refer to when I write „I“, and what this is all about. My name is Dorothea Mines, I studied scenography as a master, and this writing is my final document within that studies.

The master consists of two years of intertwined practice and theory. The experience and the conduction of that two years were shaped by my individual experience of them. It was a process of navigating it, reacting to offers as well as following the logic of my own path. There were times when I was stuck, and times when I had sudden insights that brought me further. Artistic research is not a straight road.

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<sup>0</sup> Charles Lowe (editor) and Pavel Zemliansky (editor), "Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing" (West Lafayette, Indiana: Parlor Press, 2002), P 6

The principle of the master scenography is artistic research, which puts emphasis on process and artistic practice in order to investigate an individual research question. The research question motivates investigation which includes practical, hands on, creative, performative activities as well as theoretical exploration through reading, writing, thinking, communicating and receiving feedback. I searched a long time for a research question that I would trust enough to lead and guide me, as I feared restriction of my many angles on scenography. Finally, supported by experimentation done, my interest in active spectatorship and sound channeled into a research question which fueled work: „How to blur the borders between body and space through sound?“ You will read more on how this came about in chapter two.

When I started the studies, I had a bachelor in costume design and had worked in a theater environment with costume and stage for a year. I started the master because I wanted to have space and time to explore and practice more freely.

What is scenography? The specific questions and approaches to space come in a great variety. Because it is an interdisciplinary practice it can show itself in multiple forms and can be approached from different angles.

Studying it as someone with a theater background meant that I needed to question my assumptions about scenography. It required gaining an own understanding about scenography by practicing it. Viewing space as material. Testing tools like light, sound, material, aesthetic, function and expectation. Thinking and working with how a spectator approaches and experiences space and influencing that relationship between spectator and space as a maker. Scenography means dealing with space as well as with being in space.

Research is a process of discovering and sharpening meaning and reflection. Conjuring this document was a theoretical exploration activity. I read on topics that seemed urgent and felt to connect to my research. I found words that resonated with me. Discovering words to clarify my thoughts and employing them in my writing was an engagement in the relationship with my research. They are propositions for reflecting, and lead to models to contemplate within. I wanted to enter a dialogue with these finds in this writing.

Let us dive in.

# Challenging Spaces

## 1.1 'Performativity'

In this chapter, prefacing the parts that take reference to my research question, I want to give a clearer view on my understanding of scenography. This means not looking at a fixed position, but at the process I undertook to navigate scenography. For that, it is important to reflect on some central topics within scenography that I challenged throughout my master. 'Stage', 'spectator' and 'experience' form the corner stones of scenography for me. Having studied costume design as a bachelor, my preconceptions about scenography and space were mostly influenced by theater. Studying the master, 'performativity' replaced 'theatre' as a lense through which to see scenographic practice.

I think scenography is best anchored in performativity, a paradigm shift that can not be overrated. I find this shift best illustrated in the following quote:

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*„Richard Schechner, for example, in a much-quoted address he gave at the Association for Theatre in Higher Education conference in 1992, has gone so far as to say:  
The new paradigm is 'performance', not theatre. Theatre departments should become 'performance departments'. Performance is about more than the enactment of Eurocentric drama. Performance engages intellectual, social, cultural, historical, and artistic life in a broad sense. Performance combines theory and practice. Performance studied and practised interculturally can be the core of a 'well-rounded education'.“<sup>1</sup>*

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To give a definition of performativity is both complicated, as it is a broad field, and simple, because the least that I hold true in performativity is that it means: “something happens”. Performativity means thinking conceptually as well as applied. Performativity is which invites a thinking beyond conventional borders. Performativity discovers spaces.

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*„Unlike theater, performance art can take place in any space, whether marked as an aesthetic space or not, (...)“<sup>2</sup>*

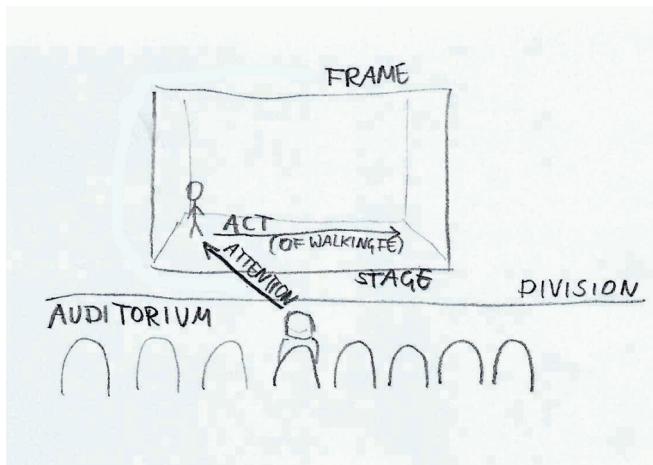
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<sup>1</sup> Erin Strifff, "Performance Studies" (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), P 3

<sup>2</sup> Sruti Bala, „The Entangled Vocabulary of Performance“, Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities Vol. 5 Issue 2, 2013

## 1.2 'Stage'

My first year was marked with the rejection of a classical theater setting, that defines the spaces of theater as a division between auditorium and stage.



I would reflect now that I want to question the term 'stage' in general, as it is associated with a limited, square space that is exclusively occupied by actors and decor. I came to realize that what I would call a 'stage' now is just a question of framing, that anything can turn into a 'stage'. It is by guiding attention that a 'stage' is created.

*"I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theater to be engaged."<sup>3</sup>*

The bit "whilst some one else is watching him" forms a key for my new understanding of 'stage'. Saying that attention constitutes a 'stage' opens up a new dimension on how stages are conjured. Designing 'stages' is not only about filling a limited and blank space, but to think about how to draw attention. And about how the focus of spectators can be directed to move within the space and time frame of a performative event to create an overarching meaning.

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*„Performance art often questions the boundary between art and life, whereas most forms of theatre maintain the fourth wall or the distinction between an aesthetic space and the space of spectatorship outside of it.“<sup>4</sup>*

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By neglecting a predefined border between auditorium and stage, the positioning of the audience can be negotiated as part of the making process. Is it necessary to separate a space into 'auditorium space' and 'stage space' at all?

For my research, this division into stage and auditorium is not useful, since my research question looks at another division. The division between space and body, as I introduce in the next chapter.

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3 Peter Brook, *The empty space* (New York: Touchstone, 1996) P 7

4 Sruti Bala, „The Entangled Vocabulary of Performance“, *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities* Vol. 5 Issue 2, 2013

### 1.3 Discussing notions around spectatorship

By neglecting spacial divisions in “stage” and “auditorium” in my understanding of scenography, the spectator stepped into focus. This form of scenography is not only concerned with what is looked at, but extends the frame to include those who spectate.

I discovered the spectator as material. Navigating the roles of the spectator anew created some problems with the terms. The notion 'spectator' implies looking, the notion 'audience' listening, and other terms such as 'participant' also define the roles quite narrow.

Spectatorship was the notion that was first installed for the approach that is taken. It was the title of a seminar focusing on the role of the spectator, reading texts centered around the concept of spectatorship and resulting in a writing about the approach we want to take towards it in our own work. I formulated the aim to create space for an 'active spectator'.

I came up with the form of naming the three, audiences/spectators/participants and dividing them with a slash in my first presentation of the second year.

It was motivated by the fact that I want to work with people who listen, watch and act within my research and couldn't find a title that would describe this range sufficiently. The slash between the titles signifies the potential of meaning 'either or', but also 'as well as'. There is also a potential for the audience member/spectator/participant to shift from one role to the other within one performance.

In the following chapters, I do not use the whole triplet, but assume that the notion 'participants' has the potential to include the two other titles. I do think this notion is able to undermine the experimental nature of work. Yet I want to refrain from calling my work 'participatory' or 'inclusive', since I struggled with these labels in my first year. I find the focus on these as aims far too restrictive and don't think my work fits in line with works created by artists, performance and theater makers under these terms.

I feel most confident calling the audience member/spectator/participant a 'visitor'.

I went from using the plural form towards the single form of the titles, when I discovered that I am especially interested in making performances for single participants.

Throughout my research, it proofed that my experiments functioned best for one participant. As the work was occupied a lot with negotiating presence, the sole presence of a visitor provided the most focus. There has been an experiment where up to five participants at a time navigated the space with headphones, stopping in places, listening to a voice over and observing the room and the dynamic created by the presence of other audience members and light. The voice over communicated with the participants, but didn't get as much focus as for example in an experiment where the voice over with my voice was only accompanied by my presence in the space. The situation installed in that experiment was much more like a conversation in space and with space.

In other experiments, the visitor was alone (with their own voice sounding), thus focusing on their own presence, which came closest to the effect I intended.

## 1.4 Experiences

Having already discussed different notions in connection to the non fixed role spectators take in my research, I want to point in the direction of spectators as constitutors of performance with a quote:

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*„It is in the spectator that the dramatic work of art is actually born - born at the time it is experienced, and it is differently experienced by every member of the audience. The beginning of a dramatic work of art is not upon the stage or even in a book. It is created at that moment when it is experienced as movement of form in time and space.“ This text was written in 1909, by the German theatre director Georg Fuchs (originally in German, in *Die Revolution des Theaters*).<sup>5</sup>*

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This is a thought I toyed around with especially in my third semester. Thinking back then that I wanted to work either with this model of the performance being constituted in an audiences' head or the approach of a participant actually doing something that constitutes the performance itself. At some point of the thinking process, I realized that one thing not necessarily excludes the other, and that this negotiation between 'acting' and 'perceiving' had a tradition in the relationship between theater and 'performativity'.

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*„Placed together, theatre and performance span a range of investments, (...). The relationship between acting and spectatorship, between modes of action and perception, forms a central concern that connects these terms in aesthetic theory.“<sup>6</sup>*

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The employment of the word 'experience' for performances I create seems useful to bridge the divide. The following quote shall enforce this bridge:

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*„In this context we are reflecting on experiences as things themselves that we can do, things that afford possibility for movement or action. This links the physical act of movement to that of perception, recognizing that perceivers are embodied within space, with the potential to move in and relate to this space.“<sup>7</sup>*

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Employing the notion 'experience' allows me to step away from the binary roles of an audience as “maker of meaning” and “active constitutor of performance”. For within an 'experience', a participant is able to sense, explore, act and interpret.

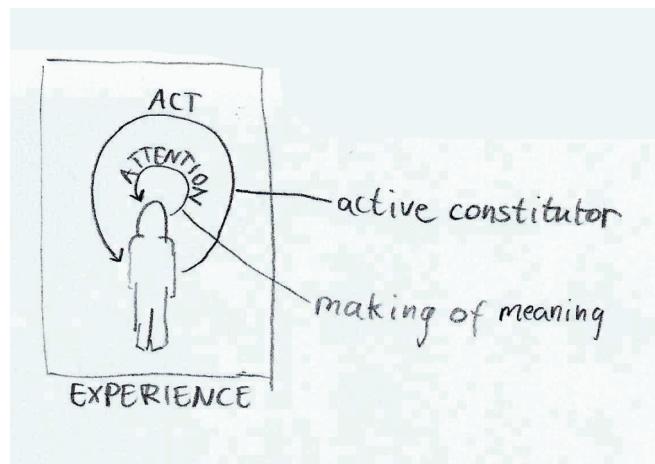
What I try to achieve with my experiments is to let the participant come in as a performative material, embed their actions and attention, let them experience the work as intertwined with their own presence.

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<sup>5</sup> Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink, Jan Wolkers, or the woolly blanket (orig. ver. Jan Wolkers of het wollen dekentje, Amsterdam: Domein voor de Kunstkritiek / Theaterschrift Lucifer, 2008) P 2

<sup>6</sup> Sruti Bala, „The Entangled Vocabulary of Performance“, Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities Vol. 5 Issue 2, 2013

<sup>7</sup> Tom Davis, „On Listening to Installation“, Performance Research On Listening, vol 15, Issue 3, 2010, P 70



### 1.5 Conclusion

I discovered scenography as a diverse practice. It incorporates interdisciplinary thinking, collaborating with other fields and operating theoretical as well as practical. Through 'performativity', it is possible to gain a wide range of agents for scenographic practice. It makes it possible to think space as well as spectators as elements that 'perform', and that can encounter each other. In this chapter, I revised some thought processes that were necessary to undertake apart from the specific research question.

# Research question

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*„How to blur the borders between space and body through sound?“*

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## 2.1 How the research question emerged

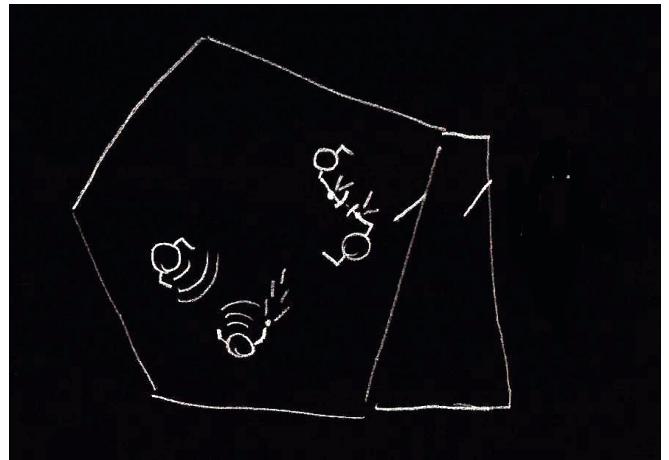
The research question surfaced through my first making process within a group in an interdisciplinary project at the beginning of the third semester.

In this project, which was finally titled „Oersoep“, I was working with Interactive Performance Design Bachelor students. I chose to join this specific group because there was already a shared interest in sound. A content task was set by the theater group Urland and the process was guided by Vinny Jones and Ruud Lanfermeijer. It was a seven weeks research project that ended showing at Het Huis under the event name „the art of technology“. The frame was set to:

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*„(...) work, create, think and explore technology within an artistic frame, more specifically theater and performance, but not shunning hybrid forms. It is inspired by questions concerning the specific aesthetics and ethics of working with technology in a performative context. It aims to screen the promise that technology holds for the arts from a creative as well as a critical point of view.“<sup>8</sup>*

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The experimentation was about navigating a space and meeting other people only on the level of aurality and for that give everybody a sound they would impersonate. We imagined that by this, people could feel in harmony or disharmony with each other. This concept was adopted and changed throughout the experimentation process due to what worked for us as our own guinea pigs and seemed interesting as an experience to mediate to participants. The final experience was based on the audience moving in a darkened space, carrying their unique sounds coming from a box on their chest. We created a glove with LEDs that could light up when people would hold their hands close to each other. The single LED on the hand lighting up when people decided to call out for others by holding their hand to the box on their chest. They wore blurring goggles, which in combination with the light effects we used created an otherworldly, underwater feeling.

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<sup>8</sup> Section from an email attachment by Interactive Performance Design course leader Marcel Dolman, 8.9.2017

I was intrigued of how a participant could „become a sound“, as I experienced in our experimentation as a participant myself. It was this feeling that inspired, viewed from a scenographical standpoint, the following research question(s):

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*„How to change perception of space and body?  
Or differently:  
how to experience space and body as entities  
with blurred borders?“*

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In the end, I transformed the research question to be more poignant.

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*“How to blur the borders between body and space through sound?”*

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In my first year, I struggled to find myself a research question, experiencing it as a rather restricting force on my work. Fearing that it wouldn't tolerate any creative endeavors outside of its logic. But as soon as the research question was set, it created a pull for research activities. It became the filter through which I encountered the more general topics that had interested me before and that I brought up in the previous chapter. The research question remained, and the research developed its own logic that I followed along.

## 2.2 How sound became a theme

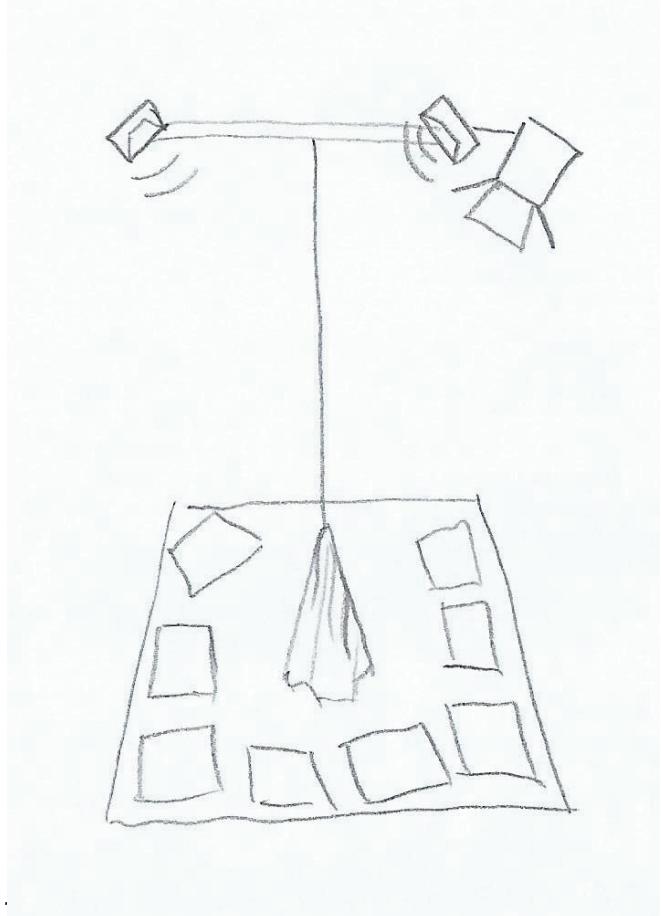
Sound came up as a material to work with for me when faced with the task of conducting and presenting an interview with an artist in the second semester.

I chose artist Cocky Eek, whom had been suggested as an inspiration for me before. I read as much as I could about her work, which is rather sensual, going beyond mere visual designs, her process being a lot about experiencing herself and letting materials and spaces resonate with her.

At that time, I listened a lot to a podcast series, [badatsports.com](http://badatsports.com), every episode being a conversation with an artist about their work and their process. Enjoying to consume this form of interview myself, it was clear to me that this was going to be the form my presented interview was going to take too.

The conceptual framework I had for the multiple interviews I wanted to conduct with Cocky Eek, was for it not only being a conversation between me and her. As I knew she was researching with materials, I asked her to bring samples to our first interview. Knowing that an audience could not see or touch them later, but hoping that their qualities would be conveyed by us talking about them, or that they would function as a sort of non-verbal partner in the conversation.

Secondly I wanted to conduct it in spaces that could influence us and our recording. I chose a greenhouse for our second conversation. This is where my first questions about the relationship between space and audio started. Could space be conceived in an aural form?



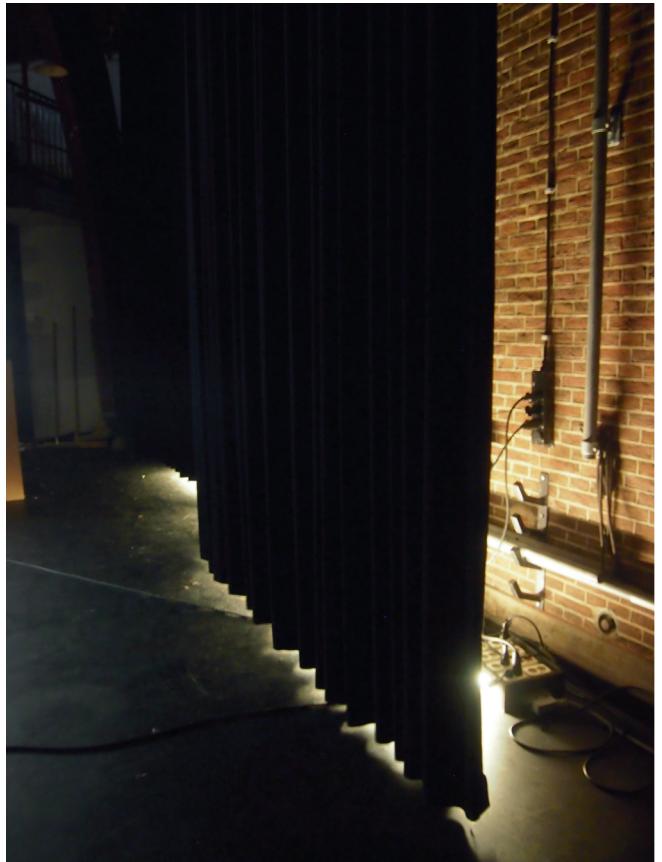
It was this thinking about space as listening-space, that inspired my work for the final exhibition of the first year. I used the theater curtain as a given element in the space we presented in, using the potential it signifies, theater conventionally happening in front or behind it. I curated sentences from the notebooks I had written in throughout the year, pinning down my fantasies and questions about space, and recorded them. They were played from speakers behind the curtains, in a volume that required an audience to step closer to them. Several audios were looping at once, the distance between them meaning that you could walk listening from one to the other.

This work placed emphasis on both the content of the audios, but also the activity of listening to them. The set-up meant, that audiences behaved towards it spatially, actively, moving and potentially becoming a performer in the space themselves.

Editing the audio was an interesting process for me. Constructing the dramaturgical arch and densening the conversation was a deepening investment in the potentials of this type of text that still influences my work.

I thought up a set-up to present the interview in. How to position the audience? How would the position of the speakers relate to the position of the audience? I conducted several tests around these questions, seeking to engage the audience as much as possible.

Finally, I placed the audience in the middle of a room on pillows on the ground, forming a circle with a single light spot centered on them. The audio was coming directly from above.



## 2.3 Reading on sound

Reflecting on these experiences, it seemed to be useful to investigate in context to sound. And as I pointed out in the previous chapter, the research question was formulated based on an experiment that relied on sound as a tool. I started my research with reading as a research activity. My impression of the importance of sound was supported by quotes I found. And I would like to name some here that spoke to me.

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*„I think Einstein once defined the environment as 'everything that isn't me'. In my sonic life, I'm not sure where the line falls any more.“<sup>9</sup>*

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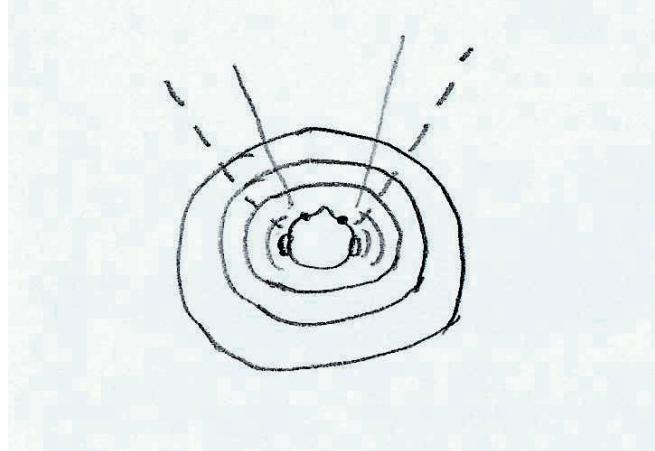
This quote indicates that sound has a potential to confuse our perception of what our body and the environment is. It opens up the possibility to blur the experienced divide of the two. The following quote gives a metaphor on how this can possibly be achieved by sound, due to its specific spacial qualities.

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*„However, whereas touch enables us to explore space near our bodies, listening has the capacity to extend our senses away from our body into the space itself. Borrowing a metaphor from Steven Connor, listening can be described as extending the reach of our bodies in the same way that water in a bath extends the reach of our skin (Connor 2005). It is through the act of listening that we feel ourselves to have real physical contact with distant objects: a physical connection to a bigger and larger space. Sound, then, has a way of highlighting our experience in the world.“<sup>10</sup>*

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I interpret from this statement, that the different senses propose different qualities for receiving space, and listening has the capacity to make the sensing subject connect to space.



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9 Ross Brown, Sound – A Reader in Theater Practice (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) P 4

10 Tom Davis, „On Listening to Installation“, Performance Research On Listening, vol 15, Issue 3, 2010, P 68

## 2.4 Trajectory of researching with sound

### 2.4.1 Sound location

As I discussed, putting emphasis on the location of sound was already a theme for me executing the interview assignment. Supported by the quotes given above, I started my research on that note.

I came up with a term that became the headline to an experiment I did. It was 'soundscape', which is a fusion of 'sound' and 'landscape'. My idea was, that different sounds coming from different locations could put an additional layer on a space, a second space in which an audience would get immersed.

I downloaded free sound from the internet that seemed interesting and suitable for me. For example steps, a train approaching, a siren.

I put them on MP3 players connected to boxes and experimented with putting these in various locations in a space.

Early experimentation showed I needed to dense the soundscape, that there needed to be various things audible at the same time to keep it interesting. Additionally, that the effect was bigger if the types of sounds traveled through the room.

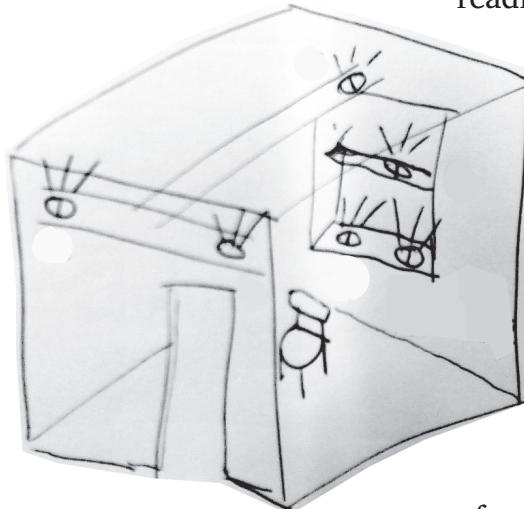
Concluding my assumption about the different locations from which sound could come, my experiments indicated that visitors could in most cases not perceive that different sounds came from different speakers. However, the invisible distribution of sound sources in a room provided an immersive layer on space.

### 2.4.2 Looping

Another idea emerged in this context. I incorporated the voice of a visitor in the soundscape, which I recorded secretly before, created a track looping the sentence while the person was already in the soundscape and then played it over a bluetooth box. The motivation here was to incorporate an element of interaction for the visitor. Something that would personally engage the spectator in the space with the soundscape.

As the way of doing it, I chose to let the visitor open a fortune cookie, reading the sentence inside it.

The visitors voice was important to me as an element, not the meaning of a sentence. I just wanted to make them talk, and that was my first idea of how to do it without having to seek out a meaningful sentence myself.



It introduced an element of coincidence, while at the same time it felt very personal to the participant. They would have a unique sentence, undermining the recognition of their own voice saying the sentence they developed an attachment to. In the first tryout with myself, with my own fortune cookie sentence, the sentence „Do not make extra work for yourself.“ repeated. The repeated sentence had a mantra like quality. Experiencing it felt like listening to my own thoughts. The soundscape became a mental space.

So in this case, a situation in space became something that one recognizes as analogue to an inner experience.

I refined the way in which I inserted a

visitors voice into later experiments through usage of a loop station, a device that when hooked up to a microphone and a speaker can record, repeat and layer sound. I connected the loop station to regular microphones, in which I or a participant could speak. I ended up separating the space where microphone and loop station were placed from the one where the speakers were located in.

I let the visitor speak a sentence into the microphone before entering the space, taking advantage of the fact that a loop station can pick up a sentence when in record mode, but still lets live speaking into the microphone go through to the speakers without looping it when in repeat mode. This enabled me to speak into the microphone live, without the audience member seeing me.

It also came in handy that the recording can be muted with a loop station, and the volume can be increased gradually with a knob. I used this to not play the visitors sentence directly, but letting them encounter the space first. The soft incoming of their own voice then came as a surprise to them. The experiments done with a loop station were a follow up of my experience with the visitors sentence in the “soundscape” experiments.

### 2.4.3 aural architecture

Aural architecture is about the ways in which space is perceived sonically. The following principles rely on immediate responses space produces to the encountering body.

There are certain sonic responses one gets of the properties of space triggered by usual body behavior. Like steps. The sound of the steps one perceives when walking gives information about the material of the floor or the size of the room they are executed in. The sonic bouncing of our voice in a room is also depending on its size, architectural material and proximity of walls and ceiling. I found this broken down more adequately in the following quote.

---

*„When the sound wave from a hand clap is reflected from that distant wall, we hear the reflection as a discernible echo. The distance to the wall determines the delay for the arrival of the echo, the area of the wall determines the intensity, and the material of the wall's surface determines the frequency content. These physical facts relate only indirectly to perception. Our auditory cortex converts these physical attributes into perceptual cues, which we then use to synthesize an experience of the external world. On the one hand, we can simply hear the echo as an additional sound (sonic perception) in the same way that we hear the original hand clap (sonic event). On the other hand, we can interpret the echo as a wall (passive acoustic object). The echo is the aural means by which we become aware of the wall and its properties, such as size, location, and surface materials.“*

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*The wall becomes audible, or rather, the wall has an audible manifestation even though it is not itself the original source of sound energy.“<sup>11</sup>*

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The context the quote presents is rather architectural. But I also found an example that points out that the impressions of space via sonic feedback can be imitated artificially.

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*„From the perspective of electronic music, spatial design is an application of aural architecture without assuming a physical space. Musical space is unconstrained by the requirements for normal living, and musical artists are inclined to conceive of surreal spatial concepts. Like M. C. Escher's painting of an imaginary space with interwoven staircases that simultaneously lead upward and downward, aural artists also have the freedom to construct contradictory spaces.“<sup>12</sup>*

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Technique can mimic the effects of aural architecture. My investigations involved mostly artificial aural architecture. What I took as a gist from aural architecture, physically or artificially, was the fact of immediacy (the direct effect of a sonic impulse that can be perceived with almost no delay) and the responsiveness (space responses to sonic impulses with feedback). I thought of the two together, immediacy and responsiveness, as 'liveness' as a tool-term throughout my research.

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11 Barry Blessing and Linda-Ruth Salter, *Spaces Speak, Are you listening?*“ (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009) P 2

12 Barry Blessing and Linda-Ruth Salter, *Spaces Speak, Are you listening?*“ (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009) P 164

One example of experimentation conducted on the basis of spacial response to an aural trigger was a 'live' connection installed between body and space.

Light intensity was connected to a microphone, meaning that when a visitor spoke in the space, a screen above their head would flicker.

I initiated the participants speaking via a voice over, that I had pre-recorded and that played via headphones during the experiment. In it, I would ask the participant to „repeat after me: (...)“. So I employed both the visitors responses as a 'live' element and my voice over as a 'pre-recorded' element. I also stood in the room 'live', but didn't speak, and in that somewhat separated my present self from my pre-recorded voice.



## 2.5 Voice, speaking, words, meaning

This topic might come as a thematic jump. Without noticing consciously, I had spent a lot of time researching, working with and employing voice. It came as a surprise to me when writing this chapter, that it became necessary to thematize it.

In writing I discovered that the employment of voice went beyond what I had set out to investigate the blurring of borders between body and space through sound.

Voice is such an important expression of our sonic being in the world. The most personal way in which we intervene in the sonic reality of the space surrounding us. Voice showed to be a meaningful material throughout my experimentation, which I will give some examples of.

I have talked about the ways in which I incorporated a visitors voice. Playing with recognition of their own voice for example with the pre-recorded sentence out of a fortune cookie, or in later experiments, looping a sentence they spoke. Another manner was making lights flicker as an effect of a participant speaking, and by that installing a responsive relationship between voice and space.

On the other hand, I started using my own voice too. It started after the soundscape experience, so relatively early. At first, it was just out of convenience. In a workshop on light, a classmate (Sam Bachy) and me wanted to guide and direct the audience. So we recorded and composed a track and gave our participants mp3 players and headphones. His voice told them where to go, providing guidance that could as well be understood as orders. At the same time, we also tried to write in a performative tension. So we inserted my voice asking them rhetorical questions, such as „Do you

like to follow orders?“ or „Where do you think you are?“ And we included read sections from a book about light, as an element that conveyed content.

This experience of what I will from now on call a 'voice over' was channeled into my own research.

I used the voice-overs as practical means, to make people act as the experiment required, to frame what the performance was about or as an effect. For example: “Can you hear me?” both serving to check if the technique worked and to have the first 'dialogue' of voice over and participant. Giving orders or guidance, for example: „You can enter the space now.“ Making them speak by demanding to repeat a sentence: „I am here.“ Raising poetic questions: „What is more real, my body you are seeing or my voice you are hearing?“ One could say, I discovered the friction between my pre-recorded voice and my present body in this. And I would also use it to convey content. Talking about my research as a way of making a performative presentation. I found using my voice useful as a basis to create a performative situation. And in that, I often installed a relationship between an audience member and my voice by addressing them.

Although voice was already an unexpected theme to discover when writing my thesis, this topic lead me even further.

Using voice meant in my experiments using words, speaking. This effectively included the layer of meaning, words are signs. When voices say words, they „mean“ and „sound“, making it a multi-layered material.

I started using words in a more random manner, in the fortune cookie situation, the sentence that would be pulled out

## 2.6 Conclusion

didn't matter to me, the material of voice was more essential. And in the first voice over experiment done with a classmate, described above, the content was chosen very spontaneously, fitting in some cases the context of light, in some referring loosely to the situation and for the rest just asking participants to do something. In this instance, voice was already not mainly the material, but the meaning that is conveyed by words. In my further research, I created some performative situations, where meaning participated in constructing the experience and the meaning of a performance.

I have the feeling I oscillated between the two positions of voice as material or meaning as material, especially when looping sentences. Because when listening to a looped sentence, an audience members attention can shift between hearing (the voice) and listening (to the meaning). It is these transitions that are interesting to me.

To round up this paragraph, it is important for me to point out that I do not intend to abandon sound as a tool to investigate the blurring of borders between body and space completely.

I have given examples in this chapter both on how sound and sounding can be useful being perceived as a material that places body in space. I would claim that sound and sounding is able to perform in a more physical, subconscious manner. And, as opposed to that, I see spoken words charged with meaning to perform more cerebral, consciously.

I want to assume that in order to blur the borders between space and body, both sounding and meaning with the shared ground of voice can be employed. And that choices and shifts emerge in favor of one or the other can occur organically in the development of a performative piece.

This chapter recalls my research trajectory from practical research employing sound towards recognizing the importance of voice that took place in the research. And the realization that speaking voices necessarily come with meanings. This revelation will be tackled in chapter 5, because its topic 'the real' showed to be a bridge.

By writing this chapter, it also became apparent to me that I had stuck to the term 'liveness' in context to sound while researching, and that in hindsight, the term doesn't feel to apply in the same way. Maybe because 'liveness' is a term in music as well as in other fields.

When reworking this chapter, I attempted to resolve this unclarity by tracing its meaning back to 'immediacy' and 'responsiveness'. For me, another connection emerges of my former clinging to the term 'liveness' and my interest in 'presence' and 'the real' that are also reappearing themes in my research. Things that I had before assigned to be about 'liveness' can now found under my the notion of 'presence' in chapter 5.

In this chapter, I hope I have given evidence of the numerous docking points I found under the umbrella term 'sound' to tackle the task of blurring the borders between body and space. How theory fueled experimentation.

# Visual and aural don't have the same rules

## 3.1 Thinking practice

There was a statement made by a tutor (Vinny Jones) to me, responding to my effort to achieve the blurring of borders between body and space through sound. It was:

„Audio space and visual space don't have the same rules.“

This statement achieved two things. For one, it was pointing to the lack of consideration of „the visual“ in my research up to that point. It raised the question of HOW „the visual“ can contribute to the blurring of borders between body and space. On the other hand, it also related visual and aural. In what kind of relationship do I set them in my research? It is in respect to those questions that I re-formulated the statement into the form of the title of this chapter „visual and aural don't have the same rules“, looking not only at audio space and visual space but rather visual and aural as elements. (Implying that I look at visual space and audio space, as well as at them as elements.)

The statement resonated with me in a way that I couldn't tackle exactly. I couldn't decide if I should agree or disagree to the statement, and that inspired further research. In that respect, every following research activity became an attempt to come closer to what the statement means for me.

When beginning to write about this, I didn't have the notebook with the written statement at hand. So I wrote down versions of it from memory, and by that dissected the sentence and the meaning.

---

*How do visual and aural function differently in the construction of a reality?*

*The perceptive conditions for aural and visual are different.*

*The perceived effects of aural and visual are fundamentally different.*

*When perceived, the immersive effect of aural and visual are different.*

---

Here, clearly, I was connecting the statement to the aim I had put for myself with my research question. Thinking of how to employ visual and aural for the blurring of borders between body and space. The implication here is, that the conditions of using visual and aural for that purpose are different. If the statement is taken as that, it is important to weigh out the qualities of vision and hearing in a comparative manner. Let me start the comparison with the following quote:

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*„Images are always presented in front of us, limited by our field of vision, but sound can take on a spatial component in any position relative to our bodies. Sound thus has a special relationship to the location of bodies within space, a relationship perhaps echoed in the dual functions of our ears pertaining to balance as much as hearing.“<sup>13</sup>*

---

This quote compares hearing and seeing and suggests how they make the sensing body relate to space. When I first read the quote, it sparked a more detailed, practical hypothesis about hearing in comparison to sight. I wrote down underneath the quote:

---

*I think there are two modes of using sound: the sound in the open, which relates to space and unlike visuals can not be „not looked at“. Whoever is in the room can perceive it. One can only try to focus their minds elsewhere, which is the difference between hearing and listening. On the other hand, sound can be perceived through headphones. It gives the listener an individual and intimate experience, creating a world in that moment only for them.*

---

There is one last quote I want to give here to undermine why a sense-related investigation could be useful within the frame of my research question.

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*“Vision is directional, whereas sound is omnidirectional. The sense of sight implies exteriority, but sound creates an experience of interiority. I regard an object, but sound approaches me: the eye reaches, but the ear receives.”<sup>14</sup>*

---

This enforces the statement „visual and aural don't have the same rules“. In a way it also enforces the focus on sound in my research, because when assuming that sound creates an experience of interiority, we can also assume that sound is able to penetrate the border between space and body.

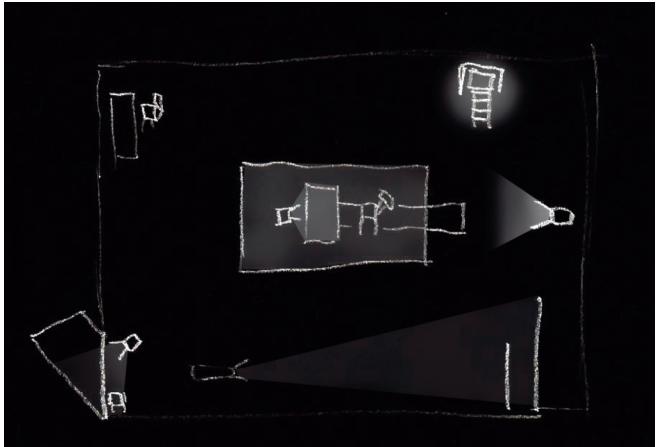
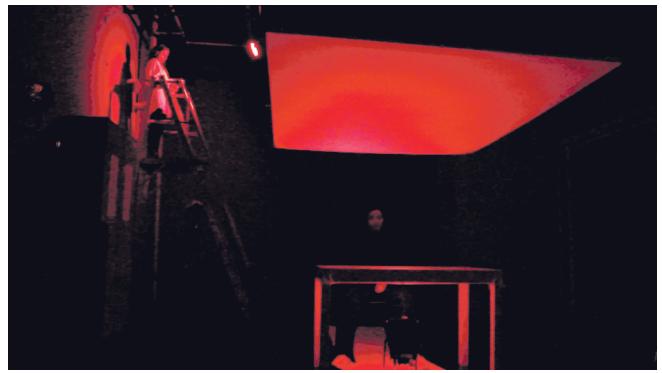
As a reaction to the statement, I had formulated the following steps I wanted to undertake in my practical research in order to explore the statement.

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- 1: Relationship between visual and aural
  - 2: Interruption and deconstruction of the relationship between visual and aural
  3. Complicating and interrupting vision and hearing
- 

13 Tom Davis, „On Listening to Installation“ Performance Research on listening, volume 15, Issue 3, P 68

14 Juhani Pallasmaa, The Eyes of the Skin – Architecture and the Senses (Great Britain: Wiley-Academy, 2005)



### 3.2 Course of practice

I want to dedicate this paragraph to work that was weighing out the relationship between visual and aural. I name ways in which I linked visual and aural in my research. The two first examples of work were done before the statement was made to me, I will nevertheless allow myself to read them through the lens of the statement. The experiment described in the following was done in cooperation with a classmate (Sam Bacht) in the context of a lightworkshop with a tutor (Vinny Jones). Everyone had posed themselves a question to work on, relating our research questions to light. Mine was: „how to create a mental bubble in space through light?“ We had made a set-up that created different sites within a darkened space through scenographic elements, architectural elements and light that could be directed live from within the space. For example, there was a ladder in the space that we placed and lit the position one could take standing on the top. We had hung a screen that we lit, people could look at it and take a seat underneath it at a table whose top was also a smaller lit screen. We had lit a corner of the room that was interestingly shaped and placed a chair for a participant in it. To make the space perform and bring our set-up to the stage of a performative event, we created a voice over that would be heard via headphones by participants and that would guide them through the space, taking position at the smaller sites one after the other. We had the audience come in staggered, so that their positions would be delayed. This achieved that people could become performers in the space for one another, looking at the different sites from their various positions.

In this performative event, the visuals came first and the audio was created accordingly and in order to make it work as an experience for participants. The aural voice-over commented on the visuals in the space.

As a somewhat opposite form, I want to describe a specific aspect of another collaboration. I am talking here about the project „Oersoep“ I described in „Introduction B“, where people were put in a space together carrying a sound, wearing goggles that limited their vision to a blur. This project started from an aural concept, even assuming that vision would be taken away entirely. In that sense, it was all about leveling out how much we had to complicate or interrupt peoples vision in order to create a rich aural experience. As the aim was to create interactions between people who embodied a sound, we had to create a focus on hearing.

Of course, people can only rely so much on hearing when they have to navigate a space together with other people. Hearing showed to be useful in making out the direction of another sounding participant. But it appeared to be difficult to make out proximities through listening.



The sounds we gave people could also not be altered when the experience was running. So aurality alone didn't pose a possibility of reacting and communicating. We developed the visual elements according to these needs that sound left open.

As I mentioned before, participants wore blurring goggles. This made light an appealing element. Light perceived through the goggles had an underwatery feel to it. LED lights that could be lit up in order to „call out“ were attached to each persons hand. When holding their hands together, even more LEDs would light up, as a response and reward mechanism.



Light was also employed in the temporal evolvement of the experience in space. After five minutes of interaction in space, not only would a sound start to play via the speakers in the room, but colorful lights would come up. This opened up the experience from something that was an intimate encounter between people towards immersing the participants in a bigger entity, the space itself. In that sense, the performative event blurred the borders between body and space, employing both vision and hearing in a very measured and balanced quantity.

The first conscious tackling of the relationship between visual and aural was an element in a performative situation that questioned the relationship between the visible and the audible. I had hung a screen in the space, under which the visitor and me would stand. The screen would be lit, and I had connected the light intensity to a microphone as a sensor. This meant that when something sounded in the space, the screen would darken. As I was not speaking, my voice audible over the headphones, and I asked the audience to repeat sentences in the voice-over, their speaking triggered the effect. My participants recognized the influence of their voice on the space, regarded it as a playful element. This was one layer in that experimentation that dealt with the relationship between visual and aural. Additionally, a friction was opened between my present, visible body

and my audible voice. I decided to keep my eyes closed, as to not “address” the visitor throughout the performance.

At some point in the voice over I asked: „I stand right next to you. What is more real: my body you are seeing or my voice you are hearing?“

I reused this idea in a video I had made when working in a theatre space, a performative action of opening and closing the black curtains and taking different positions towards the camera. The video was later projected onto a transparent screen in the same space, showing for about 5 minutes before I lit a spot behind the screen and took position in it as a present body. The audience would then be able to see me. I opened up a conceptual gap between my projected body and my present body. I contrasted the visitors sight of my projected body with the experience of my actual body.

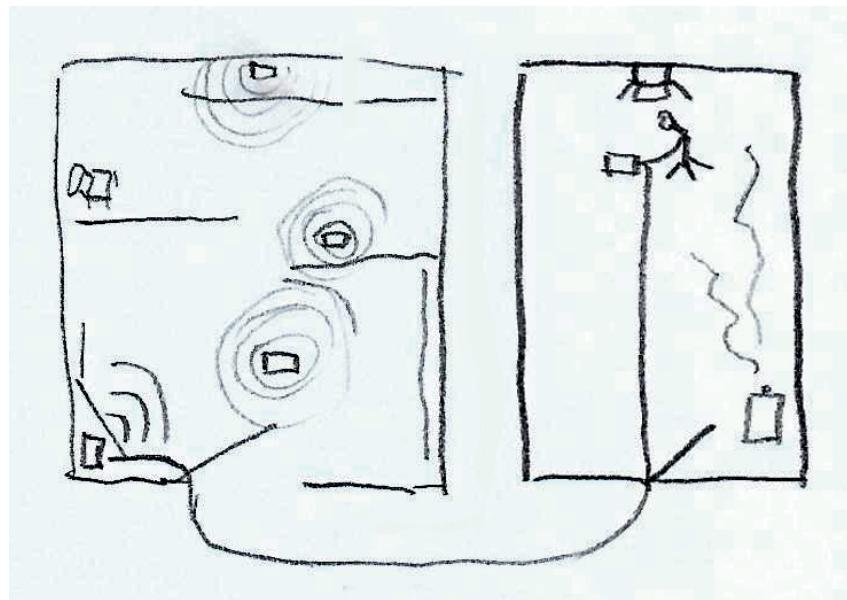
This experiment also contained a loop of a visitor saying: “I am here.” Similar to the way in which the video worked, I wanted to create a friction between the visitors vocal presence and their physical presence in the space.

To recreate the encompassing nature a sound takes in space with something visual, I experimented filling rooms with fog. I wanted to change the quality of peoples vision in the room, to change their perception of space by making it unfamiliar. I held one presentation in such a fog-filled room in combination with projection. The light of the projection started to have an almost material quality, because the rays were caught by the fog. I found the result to be rather spacial instead of flat.

The last experiment I want to describe here reused different elements from previous research. I call it the “two room” experiments, because I put emphasis on guiding a visitor from one room to the other. In the first room, I

would record them with a loopstation saying the sentence “I am here”, which they would then encounter looped in the next room. The first room was filled with smoke and a light that slightly blinded the visitor. In the second one, I had set up a sort of labyrinth of colorful fabric. In the first room, I would be present with the visitor, in the second, they would be alone. Yet through the open connection between microphone in the room where I remained and the box in the room with the visitor, I could speak from one room to the other. Speaking from the other side worked in some sense opposed to the voice-overs I had created before. I wouldn't be present, but my voice would take the role of a presence, addressing the visitor: “come back”, conveying an aura of immediacy.





### 3.3 Conclusion

I introduced the title of this chapter, „visual and aural don't have the same rules“, as a statement that became a basis for investigation. I worked with this statement “in praxis” and “in reading and writing”. I decided not to verify or falsify the statement for the conclusion of this chapter, because I think it is not helpful to do so. Instead, it showed important for my research to let the statement resonate with me and to keep myself open for the suggestions it offered. Vision and hearing compliment each other and together construct a sense of our body and space.

# 'The Real'

One instance in my practical research brought the notion of 'the real' to light: In a performative experiment that separated my performing body from my pre-recorded voice I asked my visitor: "What is more real: my body you are seeing or my voice you are hearing?" And I would like to read this more as a surfacing of something that had existed in the research subconsciously.

I already felt for a long time that this had to do with my research, although I couldn't tackle exactly what drew me towards this notion of 'the real', and this feeling is still present at the moment of writing this. I took this as an inspiration to write, as I hoped to carve out what the notion of 'the real' means in the context of my research. I wanted to gather the threads that lead to an occupation with 'the real'.

#### 4.1 'real' and 'reality'

It is necessary to deal carefully with words that are just slightly different, but indicate something else, imply different concepts. That goes for the notion 'real' or 'the real'. I found a hint on the different meanings in this quote:

---

*„The atomisation of reality produced a necessity to recover contact with it through the use of the singular, experience or the unique document through the individual, the body and what was defined as 'real' as opposed to 'reality', which was being offered more and more as a construction that lacked any real foundation, and ever closer to what technology was making possible with 'virtual reality', in which the body was reduced to a disposable limit.“<sup>15</sup>*

---

So how do I define the difference between 'real' and 'reality'?

As I deduct from the quote, a 'reality' is constructed in its entirety and consistency by elements that can be called 'real'. (Which are experienceable, connected to the individual or to the body.) In my work, the 'real' elements have been an important object, helping me to construct a 'performative reality'.

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*„Clearly the criterion of truth is no longer identified with the criterion of reality. However, this does not imply a rejection of the real, since the construction of this 'parallel' world aims to suggest to the viewer an alternative to their everyday life, in which he can find the real that is hidden, or the real he has attempted to hide via the construction of an immobile and opaque illusion of reality.“<sup>16</sup>*

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I used 'real' elements in my inquiry for blurring the borders between body and space. One could say: in order to suggest to the viewer, in my case the visitor, an alternative for the experienced divide between body and space in 'performative reality'.

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15 José A. Sánchez, "Practicing the Real on the Contemporary Stage" (Bristol: Intellect, 2014 ) P 151

16 José A. Sánchez, "Practicing the Real on the Contemporary Stage" (Bristol: Intellect, 2014 ) P 41

## 4.2 Experience

Having already spoken about the “experienceability of ‘the real’ and “the experienced divide”, I need to clarify at this point why ‘the real’/‘reality’ connects undetachable with experience. In the quotes given above, ‘reality’ is described as a construct. The experience of ‘reality’ is constructed by perceptual understanding, gathered information in the present consisting of impressions, thus signals. As well as mental understanding, which is conveyed by familiarity or recognition and a societal narrative, thus signs. These get bridged by consciousness into what we call a ‘reality’, that our brain lets us experience. What I mean here is that the signals (sound, voice, visuals) with which perceptual understanding operates can not be called ‘real’. They are virtual, only existing when they are perceived and through the fact that they are “send out” by objects that are presumably ‘real’. As opposed to that I see the signs. Things that I would call ‘real’, which are grasped by mental understanding as a whole/‘making sense’ are for example bodys and words. So there is a difference between signals that can be perceived and signs that can be interpreted. I noticed that I employed both modes in my research.

## 4.3 Perception

But I need to do a step back here. Because I didn’t derive from this understanding of ‘experienced reality’ within my research. In fact, my tools, sound, voice and words led me to think about ‘reality’. By attempting to blur the experienced borders between body and sound, I had inevitably agreed to the fact that ‘reality’ is negotiable. It is necessary for the research to regard the ‘reality’ of space and body as a subjective, perceived reality. It is necessary for the research to derive from the assumption that body and space are experienced as separate. When deriving from these assumptions and using it as a basis for creating, it becomes thinkable to intervene in the perceived divide.

I see a chance to have both perceptual, as well as mental understanding of ‘reality’ engaged in my practice. My research as I can read it now, was evolving from the perception of sound, signals, towards presence, for example spoken words, signs. Focusing at the beginning of the process more on the sense/signal related aspects. As for example by being inspired by aural architecture, brought up in chapter 3, which is a well known way in which space responds perceptively to sound.

A step that followed was the recognition of the tangibility of presence. I want to remark here how most experiments contained both sound, attempts to speak to a visitors senses as well as playing with presence and meaning.

#### 4.4 Presence

Physical and vocal presence were forms in which I encountered one such 'real' element that helped construct 'performative reality'. Through juxtaposing it with mediated presence, that is to say an image in the case of physical presence and a recording in the case of a vocal presence.

Examples for this are videos filmed with me in them or voice-overs made with my voice that were part of performative events, within which my body or voice would also become present at intervals.

In one instance, I had filmed me building up in a theater space, and picked a video of me opening and closing the curtains. I projected the video in the same space onto a transparent screen. In the following performance, the visitor would see my mediated self on that screen and I would enter the space as a real physical presence and perform in front and behind the screen.



One could say I discovered my 'real' presence as performative material.

I worked with visitors similarly, the experiments I created were relying on their 'real' presence. Using for example their aural presence, their voice, which was essential as a part of every performative event in which I recorded and replayed it. Hearing themselves created this gap in what they perceived as 'real'.



For example I let them speak the sentence "I am here" into a microphone in one space and guided them to another space, where they would start hearing this recording looped.

These 'performative realities' questioned concepts of here and now, other space and time, body and space as separate entities.

## 4.5 Words

### 4.5.1 Words as signs

In the „sound“ chapter, I claimed that using voice meant using words. It is to include the layer of meaning, words are signs.

I want to get back to the problematic posed in chapter 3, as I now placed the notion of 'signs' within my understanding of constructed 'reality'. Formulated in my own thoughts, words are belonging into the realm of illusion/symbolic. They are themselves a system that consists of symbols for something they mean, they are connected to 'the real' in the sense of a representation of 'the real'.

This quote gives another account of this thinking and may also help contextualize the topic of words as signs to that of 'reality':

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*„On the one hand we have the semiotic, the linguistic, the symbolic, whose elements stand in for absent realities and whose utilization is governed by more or less fixed abstract structures. On the other hand we have the realm of physical presence, whose elements offer an accessible reality, which, however, can only be understood within a specific, never precisely repeated context (...)“<sup>17</sup>*

---

This quote serves to oppose words (that “stand in for absent realities”) to the topic of 'presence' discussed in a previous paragraph.

Yet the potential of words in connection to 'reality' is not completely exhausted as to “stand in for absent realities”. I want to make the point this relationship can be used the other way around. Where words do not stand in for absent realities but produce formerly absent realities.

### 4.5.2 Words producing performative reality

What I stated intuitively in a previous edition of this chapter was:

Personally, I believe that by stating something, it can become truth. At least it enters the horizon of realness, it creates 'performative truth'. Because it makes the thing stated possible to think it. For me, reality is not only about the things that physically exist, but about what is thinkable.

So much was graspable for me. In a feedback it was remarked, that I pretend 'what is said doesn't matter', whereas the person who criticized me argued that he had the impression what was stated mattered a lot. Utilizing this hint motivated me to do further reading.

I came across the notion of 'performative speech acts' and the field of 'pragmatics' which shall help me to put my contemplation in a discursive background.

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<sup>17</sup> Marvin Carlson, "Performance: a critical introduction" (New York: Routledge, 2004) P 64

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A quick introduction to the basic idea in a quote:

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*„The foundation of speech act theory were laid in the William James Lecture series delivered by (John) Austin at Harvard in 1955, and published as How to Do Things with Words. Austin called attention to a particular type of utterance which he named a „performative.“ In speaking a „performative,“ someone does not simply make a statement (...) but also performs an action – as, for example, when one christens a ship or takes marriage vows.”<sup>18</sup>*

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To give examples from my own work, it is useful to point out that Austin:

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*„distinguishes three types of verbal „actions“ and, since these are operations on different levels, all three are typically involved in a single utterance; they are the locutionary, the illucutionary, and the perlocutionary. Locutionary acts involve making an utterance with a certain sense and reference, roughly equivalent to „meaning“ in the traditional sense.“*

---

**I am here“**

---

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*„Illocutionary acts are utterances with a certain conventional „force“ (as opposed to „meaning“); they call into being, order, and promise, but also inform, affirm, assert, remark, and so on. The focus here is on the force such utterances seek to apply to their discursive situation.“*

---

**„You can enter the space now.“;  
“Come back.”; “Repeat after me: ...”**

---

*„In perlocutionary acts, analysis focuses not upon what the utterance is doing but on what it seeks to bring about in a hearer: convincing, persuading, deterring, even surprising or misleading.“<sup>19</sup>*

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**„What is more real: My body you are seeing or my voice you are hearing?“**

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One such utterance I personally enjoyed in its multi-layeredness was: „Can you hear me?“ It set the stage for my voice in the audio track, which was heard via headphones, both serving to check if the technique worked and to have a 'dialogue' of voice over and participant (who would answer the question). This installed a relationship between listener and voice. At the same time, it foreshadowed the content of this experience, which was about listening.

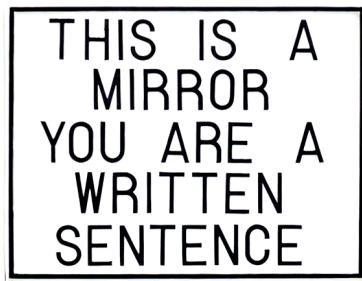
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18 Marvin Carlson, "Performance: a critical introduction" (New York: Routledge, 2004) P 61

19 Marvin Carlson, "Performance: a critical introduction" (New York: Routledge, 2004) P 62

#### 4.5.3 written and vocal words producing performative reality

It might be necessary at last to leave the realm of aurality completely, in order to show the performative effect of words (in space) through pictures. Pictures of work by other artists.



This is an example (20) from conceptual art by Luis Camnitzer. What I find intriguing here is the possible transformation of the readers body. It is a transformation that happens (through

reading and interpreting) in the spectators head, including the interpreter for a game of concepts. And by that, it raises questions of 'reality', 'self' and 'body'/reflection'.

Something that I experience to be 'real' is seeing myself in a mirror, because that mirror as well as my reflected body are 'real' in its materiality. I can imagine that the experience of having seen my reflection numerous times influences my sense of self. Recognition of oneself in a mirror is even seen as a test to identify consciousness in beings. Yet is this not a convention that is brought about by its commonness? How would my sense of self be if I read myself 'as a sentence' more often (reading can be seen as parallel to "looking at")? For my research it would



The next example (21) was important for me to pick, because it places a statement in space.

In fact, I have seen pictures of this statement in different settings, a gallery for example.

"There will be no miracles here" can be interpreted with help of Austins types of verbal "actions". The work plays with locutionary meaning, the word "here"

20 <http://www.theartoflanguage.org/english-and-spanish-classes-barcelona/2016/1/25/art-language-the-art-of-language-gracia>

21 <https://www.artfund.org/supporting-museums/art-weve-helped-buy/artwork/11647/there-will-be-no-miracles-here>

connecting it to its surroundings, the space it needs to become an installation. It plays with Illocutionary meanings as in making the promise or in informing the onlooker that “there will be no miracles”, I am reminded of formal traffic signs here. It plays with its perlocutionary meaning, trying to convince the visitor with its prediction that “there will be no miracles”, even inviting the visitor to “make miracles happen” in to resists the statement. In that, it even raises potential in a space it occupies. Through stating that something will not happen, the potential to think that it could happen is unleashed.

Having discussed two visual examples here, I ask myself how written statements differ from voiced statement embeddet into a performative encounter in effect.

First answer I thought of was: „their materiality“. But the above discussed artworks do for me not primarily work through their materiality, but the performative power of their statements meanings. (Although the second one is visually appealing and in a visual relationship to the temporality of its surroundings by being able to light up.) Another interpretation I have of the difference between written and voiced is, that the charakteristics of an 'author' of a written statement can stay entirely anonymus, whereas a voiced statement transports amoung its meaning an appearance of its speaker. Through that, such my hypothesis, the visitor assigns a

goodlike, super-ego, or authoritative status to the written statement. As opposed to that, to a voiced statement, one enters a more horizontal relationship.

Taking at last a sense related approach to define the differences, the written statement has an „in front of me“ - materiality were I can only look or look away. The voiced statement instead is encompassing and allows one to switch between the mode of listening (to its meaning) and hearing (the qualities of voice). I can imagine that one statement can be used both in a visual and a vocal form and generate different effects in a performative installation. And that they enter in different relationships with their surrounding spaces.

Now having dived deep into contemplation on the basis of the perform-ability of words, I want to come back to the use of these finds for my research, in an almost manifest like fashion:

I set out to find performative utterances which have the capacity of calling into being.

It is useful to embed words into a context where they are able to act performatively. By enforcing, commenting or question 'reality'. (As in: “What is more real: my body you are seeing or my voice you are hearing?”) In a feedback it was claimed that: “Your (mine, the researchers) words are my first frame to the experience. Thus arrives my assumption that it is also useful to reference the 'reality' in a way that frames it to produce 'performative reality'.

#### 4.6 Conclusion

Noting that I not talked about space in the foreground in this chapter, I want to give a quote about performance art here, found in the preface of a book titled, "Blurring the Boundaries", which I feel fits neatly into the narrative of my research question.

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*„Fundamental to this work (installation art) are its habitation and incorporation of a physical site, a connection to real conditions – be they visual, historical, or social – and often, a bridging of traditional art boundaries. The aesthetic power of installation art does not reside in the singular, commodified object but rather in the artwork's ability to become, not merely represent, the continuum of real experience.“*

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Art takes place in reality.

The wonderful thing about research is, that it is possible to stagnate at some points, reflect on how things have failed, and then set out again. This happened within this chapter, in its first version I claimed that I couldn't give a personal definition of 'the real', one which works within my research, which has now succeeded. I traced the outlines of what it means for my practice. The role it took in the search of the blurred borders between body and space.

But with clearer definitions, I fear the borders between elements have been rendered more clearly. Fortunately, I know that as tangible as I can make something for myself by writing, practiced research is messier, consists of a multi-vocality of its elements. I know that these elements do not lay there neatly side by side, and they are not necessarily fitting in one category I discussed in this chapter exclusively. I think for the example of the research chain: sound, voice, speaking, words; it is quite clear that these elements can shift in effect in the moment of their application. In my future research, it might be useful to look closer at the moments of transition.

I managed to investigate what drew me towards the notion of 'the real'. I evaluated elements I have already worked with in my practice against the backdrop of 'reality' and 'the real', helped by some readings on the topic. I raised awareness of the potential 'the real' and 'reality' have for the search within my research question.

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22 Hugh M. Davies, Ronald J. Onorato, "Blurring the boundaries: installation art, 1969-1996" 33(San Diego, Calif.: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1997)

# Final Chapter

As this writing is nearing its end, I would like to come full circle. The opening chapter discussed my preconceptions about theater space and topics that came up for me in the master. In this chapter, I want to summon my views on and experiences with artistic research. In general, but also in the context of my research question.

## 5.1 Artistic research in general

A lot of people can tell you how to swim. The secret is the coordinated movements of your arms and legs, you breath out when your arms move forward and do the leg stroke. Then keep your legs straight while you push water with your arms and pull them in at your sides, breath in.

But reading this description or even knowing the theory doesn't enable anyone to swim.

For me, this is an adequate image to describe my process of understanding and practicing artistic research. I read and heard a good deal about artistic research, but practicing in water got me much closer to my own understanding.

Although having worked as a designer before, I thought of artistic work as this miraculous idea that is simply put into reality. I had little experience of how one arrives at the point where a public gets to see the work.

Already before the master, I had questioned the classical role of a scenographer as stage designer brought about by my theater experiences. I asked myself: "Can I make actors build? Scenographers rehearse? Stages perform?" In this master of course, all the strings lead back to myself.

The way in which I practiced scenography in this master showed me, that the role of a scenographer can be much more self-defined, challenging the borders of professions. Moreover, that I can choose my position within my work. The notion of the 'rehearsing scenographer' stuck with me. In my case, it describes what artistic research can be. It gives a hint of what it is like to undergo the process of an artistic research.

Rehearsing scenography means repetition. Testing the tools. Employing them in different contexts. Working in different spaces. Asking different participants to experience the work and being inspired by their verbal and non-verbal feedback. Having a balance of planning and improvisation. Responding to unfulfilled expectations and positive accidents. To start from a simple idea can be sufficient, and sticking with it can make it enfold. Dropping it doesn't mean it is gone, but that it rests until its moment comes. Building on what has been done.

### 5.1.1 Invitations

Let me take a moment to zoom in on participants as a reoccurring theme both in this writing and my practice. As I carved out my ideals and views on spectatorship on a theoretical level through reading and writing, I got clearer of how the work I made should center around participants, and thereby become experiences for a single visitor.

I am a researcher who believes in her own gut feeling. I made a habit of first testing my experiences myself. I trust my instincts when I judge if a performative event works. Yet out of this perspective, it is difficult for me to analyze how they work. That is why inviting test participants became so important for me. To observe their behavior and reactions within the experiment and to ask their opinions and impressions afterwards, altering the experiment accordingly. Partly because they showed me if I provided enough guidance for people to know what to do. To verify and falsify my assumptions about their behavior. Mainly as fresh eyes and minds. They focused on things I had not considered. They associated things I had not thought of.

And when I began performing in these experiences, they became like a partner in conversation, someone whose responses I started taking in account. For example in the first experience that contrasted my voice on a voice over with my actual presence in the space. In the first run through, I stood beside the participant, watching them. I realized my participant was feeling self conscious and not motivated to move freely, which was not what I wanted to achieve. So in the next run through I took a fixed position and closed my eyes, which provided more freedom for my participant and pushed my presence to be a performative, artificial element.

Through my experimentation it surfaced that what I wanted to achieve for a visitor was this moment of realization, a tension or friction within the understanding of body and space.

### 5.2 What writing this document meant

I noticed that in my practical work, I started operating within the frame that I had set myself with the research question, even without thinking too much about this connection.

Writing this document offered an occasion to focus more consciously on how the things I had employed worked within the frame of the research question. And revisiting my quotes was an opportunity to find theoretical connection points to discourses, that seemed meaningful for my practice in the context of my research question. It allowed me to place what I have worked with intuitively in context to my research question in a structured way. My writing activities did not provide a single answer to the question: „How to blur the borders between body and space?“ Instead, the research developed as the quest of „searching for the blurred borders between body and space“. Within that search, I have found several departure points. Convinced that selection is research as well, I will list them here in connection to the chapter they were stated in.

### Chapter 3:

- 1.) Soundscapes provide an immersive layer on space.
  - 2.) I need to transform spaces into mental spaces.
  - 3.) Sonic responses help orienting our bodies in space, but also provide a possibility to manipulate our experience of space.
  - 4.) Voices are the most personal way in which we intervene in the sonic reality of the space surrounding us.
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### Chapter 4:

- 5.) Headphones provide a mental bubble for participants in space / They gives the listener an individual and intimate experience.
  - 6.) Setting new rules for vision and hearing can create a new form/experience of being in space.
  - 7.) Voice can invade space.
  - 8.) “I regard an object, but sound approaches me: the eye reaches, but the ear receives.” sound is therefore able to penetrate the border between body and space.
  - 9.) Vision and hearing compliment each other and together construct a sense of our body in space.
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### Chapter 5:

- 10.) It is necessary for the research to regard the reality of space and body as a subjective, perceived reality. It becomes thinkable to intervene in the perceived divide.
- 11.) My experiments rely on a participant as a 'real' presence that actually constitutes the performance.
- 12.) By stating something, it creates performative truth.
- 13.) In my future research, it might be useful to look closer at the moments of transition.

These points provide record of the journey I have undertaken. I named them 'departure points' earlier. Yet they are like an interwoven system of metro stations, each point can also be viewed as 'destination' or 'changing point'. Researching is a process that requires traveling on this network.

This text also has a great importance purely for myself. As a documentation of what I have done. A manifestation of all the things I have thought about in the process. The themes that I dealt with.

It preserves for later access. This means looking back as well as looking ahead. Although this text is titled “final document” within the master scenography, it may not be a final point at all. The modes of thinking I worked out are for sure accompanying me in further artistic work and will inform my practice.

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